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Montana State
Advisory Council
on Food and
The state of
access to food and
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Montana

The State of Access to Food and Nutrition in Montana

Report of the:

**Montana State Advisory Council
on Food and Nutrition**

November, 1993

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Montana State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition

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STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-2640

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November 24, 1993

The Honorable Marc Racicot
Governor of Montana
Executive Office
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Racicot,

On behalf of the members of the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition, we present our annual report, *The State of Access to Food and Nutrition in Montana*. The report is brief and summarizes the key indicators for estimating access to food and nutrition services by the people of Montana.

The evidence of growing hunger is a clear concern. We have already seen an increase in child poverty and in poverty among the working poor. As jobs are lost throughout Montana, families that fall into poverty are forced to choose between spending limited dollars on food or shelter. Too often, they choose shelter -- leaving little or no money for food. Hunger becomes a hidden and unrecognized problem.

Hunger in Montana will continue to rise without serious changes in our ability to support the population in poverty, namely its ability to afford housing and other basic needs. The impact of chronic poor nutrition will result in an ever-increasing cost to health care for the state.

We recognize and appreciate your concern for the people of Montana. The Council is prepared to work with you and the legislature to seek solutions that would remove barriers and improve access to food and nutrition for Montanans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Minkie Medora".

Minkie Medora
Chair, Montana State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition



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I PREFACE

This report was compiled by the Montana State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition in accordance with Section 50-49-105 (2) MCA of the Montana Access to Food and Nutrition Act for the period of August, 1992 through August, 1993. The report contains an overview of the Council's mandated duties and responsibilities, activities and recommendations. It also documents the nature and extent of hunger and poor nutrition, activities of the Council in the past year and a series of recommendations.

The Council was established for the purpose of implementing the policy of the state of Montana that all citizens should have access to food programs and nutrition services to prevent any needy citizen from experiencing hunger and poor nutrition and their impact on physical and mental health. Recognizing hunger and nutritional needs are complicated issues that interact with a myriad of other factors is an important consideration in how the Council addresses this charge.

The original eleven members of the Council were appointed by Governor Stan Stephens on August 30, 1991 under Executive Order 23-91. Between August, 1991 and the present time, there have been changes in the Council. The current membership was appointed by Governor Marc Racicot on August 30, 1993. For a listing of current members, please refer to page 9 of this report.

II EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past year, the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition addressed issues in accordance with mandated responsibilities. The Council accomplished the following:

- facilitated an open forum to discuss the issue of direct certification, the process whereby children whose parents participate in either Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or the Food Stamp Program are automatically eligible for free or reduced-cost school meals;
- recognized public and private actions and individuals who significantly contributed to the reduction of hunger and promotion of nutrition in Montana;
- contributed to the development of radio and television public service announcements (PSA) to create an awareness of hunger in Montana;
- participated in a televised town meeting, *Hunger in Montana: Seeking Permanent Solutions*;
- coordinated a meeting of the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition with the boards of the Montana Foodbank Network and the Montana Hunger Coalition to discuss joint efforts to eliminate hunger; and
- provided several media interviews in response to "World Food Day" and the 1992 report. *The State of Access to Food and Nutrition in Montana*.

In order to provide a current profile of the hunger status in Montana, two significant studies were conducted which were, in part, replications of earlier studies. The 1990 Census data were also analyzed. The results of these current research findings indicate that the following households are most at risk of hunger:

- female-headed households with young children;
- households seeking employment;
- households living in deep poverty;
- households in rural counties;
- households in politically conservative counties;
- households receiving food stamps;

- households enrolled in AFDC; and
- households having high housing costs.

Further breakdown of the 1990 Census data provides the following statistics:

- 16.1 percent of Montanans live in poverty*;
- 22.9 to 50 percent of Indians on reservations experience poverty;
- 6.7 percent of Montanans live in "deep poverty" with incomes less than 50 percent of the poverty line;
- 20 percent of all Montana children under 18 live in poverty;
- 24.3 percent of all Montana children under age five live in poverty;
- 49.3 percent of all female-headed families with children under 18 live in poverty; and
- 67.1 percent of all female-headed families with children under five live in poverty.

*poverty - annual income of \$14,335 for a family of four

Based upon the research and the data collected by the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition, the Council makes the following recommendations:

FOOD ACCESS ISSUES

- Increase funding for public assistance food programs.
- Decrease barriers to access for public assistance food programs.
- Improve administrative support for public assistance food programs.
- Increase outreach for public assistance food programs to increase participation.
- Provide school breakfast, lunch and summer programs in all Montana schools.

NUTRITION ISSUES

- Provide nutrition assessments for all Montanans at risk.
- Provide nutrition therapy and evaluation for high-risk populations.
- Provide accessible health care for all Montanans.

SHELTER ISSUES

- Provide assistance with shelter subsidies and affordable housing to decrease the financial burden of shelter on the family's disposable income and leave more available dollars for food.

JOB/FAMILY ISSUES

- Promote job training that leads to real jobs.
- Promote jobs that pay a liveable wage.
- Provide adequate support for families to transition from welfare to work.
- Provide child-care support for low-income parents.
- Promote Headstart with a food and nutrition component for eligible Montana children.

III STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of every five children in Montana lives in poverty and is, therefore, at risk of hunger. The rate of hunger in Montana ranks 15th in the nation according to studies by the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University. The study along with the 1990 Census data shows that 20 percent of Montana's children under 18 experience hunger. This number represents 47,000 children. Of greatest concern is the fact that in the ten years since the previous census, Montana has had the second highest rate of increase in childhood poverty in the nation.

Hunger among the children of Montana is reflective of hunger in their families. An earlier study of hunger in Montana showed, young families with children were at the highest risk of hunger. The latest study has shown poor families, particularly young families, and families headed by single women are at greatest risk of hunger.

Several factors have contributed to the increase of poverty and hunger. Changes in the state's economy have impacted the availability and types of jobs and income. The state has moved away from traditional industries like agriculture, timber and mining towards low-wage service jobs. Poor families are more vulnerable to such changes with reduced wages, little or no benefits and loss of employment.

The poverty level in Montana is high compared to other states in the Northwest. Poverty levels vary from rural to urban areas of the state. Poverty levels on the seven Indian reservations are the highest in the state; in many cases, reaching 50 percent of the population.

Changes in the structure of the family have also been significant in Montana; more and more families are headed by single parents, especially women. There are a greater number of working mothers -- many with small children and many without child-care support or health care.

Housing costs continue to wreak havoc with the limited disposable incomes of young and poor families. Like the rest of the nation, Montanans eligible for low-income housing cannot find such housing and have to compete for rent with those who are not poor. Emergency food providers in Montana indicate low-income families dedicate available funds to housing first and to food second. This situation is compounded by the long, cold winters and increased utility costs.

While poverty and hunger are more prevalent among young families with children, the risk of hunger is also high for the poor elderly, especially those living in remote and isolated areas. Limited food dollars, stigma of welfare, along with physical limitations for shopping and cooking result in hidden and unspoken hunger in this frail group. The problem of food access and its resulting impact on health is greater in the very elderly - those over 80 years of age and among single older women.

Hunger in Montana was measured a second time as a lack of food security and food deprivation. All households surveyed experienced lack of food security. Households had to depend on emergency, non-conventional sources of food, including public food assistance. Without such options, families were unable to obtain food in any reasonable way. Food deprivation such as quantity of food, variety of food, running out of food and children saying they are hungry were also studied.

In both areas, indicators of hunger were present among: families with young children; families with employment or seeking employment; and families participating in food assistance and AFDC programs. Families in deep poverty experienced the greatest hunger. Families participating in assistance programs were also at risk of hunger. Participation in assistance programs was low and varied by county. The socio-political environment of counties impacted the level of support for the programs and the level of participation. The study showed that due to increasing underemployment, households with at least one person working full time also experienced hunger.

IV MISSION STATEMENT

To eliminate hunger and promote health through nutrition for all Montanans.

V HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL

The State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition was created by the 1991 State Legislature under the provisions of H.B. 728. The formation of the Council was one of three major outcomes of the bill. The bill was developed by the Montana Hunger Coalition and was sponsored by Representative Bob Ream, D-Missoula and co-sponsored by 26 other state legislators.

The Montana Hunger Coalition conducted a study of hunger in Montana and in October, 1990 published its report. The report identified six major areas that required action at the state level through various state agencies and the legislature.

- **CREATE A STATE COUNCIL ON FOOD AND NUTRITION** - Monitor hunger and nutrition in the state, coordinate all food assistance programs and educate the public on the status of hunger and malnutrition in Montana.
- **START A FOOD STAMP OUTREACH PROGRAM** - Develop a public education program to inform those who are eligible for food stamps to participate in the program. Assistance should also be given in applying for food stamps.
- **ENHANCE TRAINING OF THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM STAFF** - Add to the existing training programs of food stamp office staff, in order to increase sensitivity to the problems of food stamp clients.
- **PROVIDE WIC (Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Food Program) PROGRAMS IN ALL MONTANA COUNTIES** - Ensure that the WIC Program is provided in those counties not served.
- **INCREASE ACCESS TO SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS** - Provide funding to increase school food programs in order to feed children of low-income families in Montana.
- **ESTABLISH A POSITION OF A STATE NUTRITIONIST** - Create the position of state nutritionist under the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences in order to provide nutrition services to high-risk populations in Montana.

Based on the above recommendations, the Montana Hunger Coalition explored options for meeting them. The Office of Aging Services adopted the Food Stamp Outreach Program. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services implemented the food stamp staff education program. The remaining four recommendations were combined to form a single piece of legislation: H.B. 728.

H.B. 728 - An act providing for accessibility to food programs and nutritional services; establishing a State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition; creating the position of Public Health Nutritionist; mandating the extension of the WIC Program to every county; and appropriating money to the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences for nutritional services.

The above bill was passed by the 1991 State Legislature. The State Advisory Council was established under the auspices of the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences. The Department provided funding to hire the Public Health Nutritionist.

VI COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Council is comprised of representatives, serving staggered three-year terms, from the following agencies or groups:

- the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services Food Stamp Program;
- the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences WIC Program;
- the Office of Public Instruction School Food Service Programs;
- a statewide organization active in food, nutrition and hunger issues;
- the local food bank programs;
- the food and nutrition programs for the elderly;
- the general public;
- the Montana State University Extension Service;

- a Native American;
- a member of the house of representatives; and
- a member of the senate.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP: AS OF AUGUST, 1993

Cheryl Berry - Human Services Program Officer, Family Assistance Division, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Helena, Montana.

David Thomas - Director, WIC Program, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Helena, Montana.

Gary Watt - Director, Division of School Food Services, Office of Public Instruction, Helena, Montana.

Minkie Medora - President, Montana Hunger Coalition, Missoula, Montana.

William Carey - Director, Missoula Food Bank, Missoula, Montana.

Judy Morrill - Director, Gallatin County Senior Nutrition Program, Bozeman, Montana.

Dean Folkvord - Owner, Wheat Montana, Three Forks, Montana.

Lynn Paul - Food and Nutrition Specialist, Montana State University Extension Service, Bozeman, Montana.

Annette Sutherland - Director, Rocky Boy Food Distribution on Indian Reservation, Box Elder, Montana.

Jim Rice - State Representative, Helena, Montana.

Ethel Harding - State Senator, Polson, Montana.

VII POWERS AND DUTIES

According to H.B. 728, the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition is charged with the following powers and duties:

- Advise all state agencies on policies to coordinate the operation of public and private food assistance programs;
- Educate the public as to the problems and needs of hungry citizens;
- Provide a forum for review and discussion of state policies affecting hunger, food programs, and the status of nutrition for the population at risk;
- Promote food assistance programs within the private and agricultural sectors of Montana's economy;
- Recognize public and private actions and individuals who significantly contribute to the reduction of hunger in Montana; and
- Annually report to the governor on the state of access to food and nutrition in Montana.

VIII COUNCIL GOALS

To advance the powers and duties outlined in H.B. 728, the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition established the following goals:

- Facilitate communication and cooperation between the agencies administering food assistance programs (public and private) to increase access to food, reduce hunger and improve nutrition;

- Educate all Montanans about the nature and extent of hunger in the state, as well as alleviate the social stigma associated with food programs;
- Recommend and support policy initiatives to address hunger problems;
- Serve as a clearinghouse for successful strategies and information to eliminate hunger and improve nutrition;
- Conduct/cooperate in basic, on-going research to determine who is hungry in Montana, to what extent, and services to alleviate hunger;
- Identify and review operations and policies of food and nutrition programs;
- Evaluate outreach efforts of public food programs for effectiveness in reaching under-served populations; and
- Recognize individuals/programs who have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving food access and nutrition services.

IX PLAN OF WORK

At the June, 1993 meeting, the Council established the following priorities for its activities in the coming year:

- Promote the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition as a contact for and facilitator of statewide food and nutrition policy;
- Work to establish a nutrition education curriculum as part of a comprehensive school health component in grades K through 12;
- Write a letter to Montana's congressional delegation urging them to support:
 - USDA's ability to use commodities to meet the dietary guidelines, such as the incorporation of fresh fruits and vegetables and to improve the nutrition education component of the commodity program;
 - increased funding for EFNEP, TEFAP and home-delivered meals for the elderly;
 - universal free lunch for school children; and

- ▶ increased Food Stamp benefits and resource standard for AFDC and Food Stamp recipients;

- Develop state nutrition plan;
- Help develop "nutritional cooking courses" starting on the reservations through a pilot project using commodities; and
- Protect funding for public health nutritionist.

In addition, the Council is considering the following issues:

- Conduct quarterly meetings in various communities around Montana in conjunction with public "Food and Nutrition Forums";
- Develop a "Food and Nutrition Report Card" for use by local communities; and
- Establish a "formal" means of communicating with Montana's health care reform process.

X COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

FORUM ON DIRECT CERTIFICATION

In May of 1993, the Council facilitated an open forum to discuss the issue of direct certification. Direct certification is the process whereby children whose parents participate in either Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or the Food Stamp Program are automatically eligible for free or reduced-cost school meals. This method of certification can greatly increase participation in the school meals program. The forum was open to anyone interested in implementing the process.

For direct certification to be successful, cooperation between the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and the Office of Public Instruction at the state and local levels is critical. Representatives from both state and local agencies were present at the forum. The dialogue continues as efforts are still being undertaken to implement direct certification in Montana schools.

AWARDS

The Council identified seven Montanans who deserved recognition for their efforts to provide food and nutrition services to the citizens of Montana. Governor Marc Racicot presented the awards to recipients during a ceremony at the state Capitol.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

In a joint effort with the Montana Hunger Coalition, the Council produced a series of public service announcements (PSA) for radio and television. The goal of the PSAs was to create an awareness of hunger in Montana.

TELEVISED TOWN MEETING

In March, 1993 members of the Council participated in a televised town meeting, *Hunger in Montana: Seeking Permanent Solutions*. The two-hour program was produced by KUSM Public Television and was available throughout Montana. A moderator developed a scenario and posed questions to panel members, as well as fielded questions from a studio audience and phone-in viewers. Panel members included representatives of low-income groups, state agencies and a state senator. The goal of the program was to create an awareness of: 1) the problem of hunger; 2) the available resources and programs; and 3) the means to access resources and programs.

MEETING WITH MONTANA HUNGER COALITION AND FOOD BANK NETWORK

The State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition, the Montana Hunger Coalition and the Food Bank Network all have similar missions -- the elimination of hunger. It behooves all groups to collaborate their efforts and resources. In conjunction with the "Hunger and Homelessness Conference" in May, 1993, the Council coordinated a meeting of the boards of these groups. The discussion focused on continued joint efforts to eliminate hunger.

MEDIA AWARENESS

Two events in the fall of 1992 generated a fair amount of media coverage for Council members and the issue of hunger. The first was "World Food Day" in October; the second was the November presentation of the 1992 *The State of Access to Food and Nutrition in Montana* to Governor Stan Stephens. There were a number of TV, radio and newspaper interviews with Council members.

XI RESEARCH FINDINGS

ROLE OF RESEARCH IN COUNCIL ACTIVITY

Researching and documenting the nature and extent of hunger in Montana has been critical in establishing priorities for Council activities. Based on the documented problems, Council members are involved in alleviating the access and availability issues identified as contributing to hunger. The Council recognizes Dr. Paul Miller, professor of sociology at the University of Montana for his work in directing and publishing the first study of *Hunger in Montana*, as well as subsequent studies discussed in this section.

ORIGINAL RESEARCH REPORT

Hunger in Montana published in 1990 by the Montana Hunger Coalition was the seminal research document which provided a profile on the nature, extent and causes of hunger in Montana. This report documented: 1) hunger has been on the increase in recent years; 2) more than one-half of the surveyed households did not participate in the Food Stamp program; 3) volunteer efforts have significantly reduced hunger in many communities; and 4) families with young children living below the poverty level were at greatest risk for experiencing hunger.

DOCUMENTING THE CURRENT NATURE AND EXTENT OF HUNGER

In order to provide a current profile of the hunger status in Montana, two significant studies were conducted which were, in part, replications of earlier studies.

- **TEFAP 92** - The Emergency Food Assistance Program study was conducted in 1991-92 of all households participating in this program (n=9,255). This study was a partial replication of the **TEFAP 88** study and included information on household composition, levels of income, rates of participation in food assistance programs, selective hunger indicators and indicators of employment.

- **FDIR 93** - The Food Distribution on Indian Reservations study was conducted in 1992-93 of all households participating in this program (n=1,356). This was the first systematic attempt to examine hunger on Montana's seven Indian Reservations.

The results of these current research findings indicate that the following households are most at risk of hunger:

- female-headed households with young children;
- households seeking employment;
- households living in deep poverty;
- households in rural counties;
- households in politically conservative counties;
- households receiving food stamps;
- households enrolled in AFDC; and
- households having high housing costs.

Further breakdown of the 1990 Census data provides the following statistics:

- 16.1 percent of Montanans live in poverty*;
- 22.9 to 50 percent of Indians on reservations experience poverty;
- 6.7 percent of Montanans live in "deep poverty" with incomes less than 50 percent of the poverty line;
- 20 percent of all Montana children under 18 live in poverty;
- 24.3 percent of all Montana children under age five live in poverty;
- 49.3 percent of all female-headed families with children under 18 live in poverty; and
- 67.1 percent of all female-headed families with children under five in poverty.

*poverty - annual income of \$14,355 for a family of four

FUTURE RESEARCH STUDIES

Plans for additional hunger-related research by the Montana Hunger Coalition and other interested agencies and organizations include:

- hunger among school children;
- additional data analysis of the **FDIR 93** study;
- replication and extension of **Food and Nutrition Providers Survey of 1990**; and
- analysis of "request for assistance" data from the Poverello Center in Missoula.

XII PROGRAM UTILIZATION

This section indicates selected data on participation levels and dollar values of public and private food assistance programs. All information represents state wide numbers only.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM (COMMODITIES) (contact: 444-4545)

<u>Federal Year¹</u>	<u>Dollar Value of Food Distributed</u>
• 1990	\$4,296,926
• 1991	\$4,350,721
• 1992	\$4,132,292
• 1993	\$4,299,182

Dollar value represents approximately 65 percent retail value.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS (FDIR) (contact: 444-4545)

	<u>Persons Served Monthly</u>
• Assiniboine & Sioux	1,070
• Blackfeet Nation	830
• Chippewa Cree	490
• Confederated Salish & Kootenai	1,680
• Crow District VII	725
• Gros Ventre & Assiniboine	680
• Northern Cheyenne	625

SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM (contact: 444-7786)

<u>Federal Year¹</u>	<u>Meals Served</u>			<u>Persons Served</u>
	<u>Congregate</u>	<u>Home Delivered</u>	<u>Total</u>	
• 1990	1,324,502	567,238	1,891,740	50,802
• 1991	1,374,550	604,456	1,979,006	52,286
• 1992	1,294,881	597,696	1,892,577	48,717

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (contact: 444-4545)

	<u>Average Households per Month</u>	<u>Average Dollars per Household per Month</u>	<u>Total Value for Year</u>
<u>Federal Year¹</u>			
● 1990	21,052	\$155.75	\$39,347,072
● 1991	22,271	\$167.84	\$44,855,372
● 1992	24,675	\$170.66	\$50,531,306
● 1993	26,974	\$166.36	\$53,846,165

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (contact: 444-2674)

	<u>Meals Served</u>	<u>Dollar Value</u>
<u>State Year²</u>		
● 1990	4.9 million	\$4.0 million
● 1991	5.4 million	\$4.8 million
● 1992	6.3 million	\$5.9 million

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN PROGRAM (WIC) (contact: 444-4747)

<u>State Year²</u>	<u>Number of Participants (Monthly Average)</u>			
	<u>Women</u>	<u>Infants</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u>
● 1990	2,460	3,600	8,490	14,552
● 1991	2,788	3,910	9,397	16,095
● 1992	3,126	4,196	10,323	17,645
● 1993	3,288	4,357	11,107	18,752

SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM (contact: 444-2502)

	<u>Student Meals Served</u>		
<u>School Year³</u>	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Lunch</u>	<u>Total</u>
● 90-91	not available	not available	14,035,930
● 91-92	455,250	14,275,600	14,730,850
● 92-93	1,639,347	14,254,512	15,893,859

FOOD BANK NETWORK (contact: 721-3825)

Food Banks

<u>Calendar Year</u> ⁴	<u>Clients Served</u>			
	<u>Children</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Seniors</u>	<u>Total</u>
•1990	45,269	48,400	8,466	127,377
•1991	64,613	69,357	12,469	149,514
•1992	72,176	85,046	12,860	172,580

Meal Programs

<u>Calendar Year</u> ⁴				
•1990	36,965	34,625	35,713	76,228
•1991	82,615	29,057	31,839	143,819
•1992	187,866	64,840	35,545	300,839

¹ Federal year: October 1 - September 30.

² State year: July 1 - June 30.

³ School year: August - May.

⁴ Calendar year: January 1 - December 31.

XIII STATUS REPORT ON 1992 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is the status on recommendations made in the 1992 *The State of Access to Food and Nutrition in Montana* report:

- Promotes the State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition as a contact for and facilitator of statewide food and nutrition policy.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** Supported development of state-wide forum for the direct certification process for school meals.

- Promotes regional/local community food and nutrition organizations as a means of addressing problems locally.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** Supported the efforts of the Montana Hunger Coalition and *Eat Right Montana*.

- Endorses the bulletin *Food and Nutrition Exchange: Who's Doing What...* as a means of informing food and nutrition providers throughout Montana of important activities.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The bulletin is published quarterly.

- Promotes the development of a comprehensive system of nutrition surveillance for all population groups.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** This recommendation is still strongly supported, but may not be logistically possible for two to three years.

- Facilitates the development of a comprehensive state nutrition plan.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The public health nutritionist is overseeing this process.

- Encourages the acknowledgement by state and local organizations of volunteers who diligently tackle hunger in Montana.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** This is accomplished annually when the Council presents awards to deserving individuals.

- Strongly recommends the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences continue funding the public health nutritionist position.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The position is currently funded. The Council feels this position is essential and continues to provide its support.

- Advocates sufficient funding to adequately staff health and human services agencies.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council has put this recommendation on hold considering state funding issues.

- Encourages the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to more thoroughly explore the option of full coverage for nutrition services under Medicaid.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council plans to work with the Montana Dietetic Association and defer this recommendation to the Montana Health Care Authority.

- Ask the Montana Congressional delegation to support USDA's ability to use commodities to meet the dietary guidelines, such as the incorporation of fresh fruits and vegetables, and to add a nutrition education component to the commodity program.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the recommended changes in the commodity program.
- Recommends a more in-depth, comprehensive study to provide a clearer picture of the state of access to food and nutrition in Montana, especially for children.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council supports the work of the Montana Hunger Coalition in its efforts to provide this information.
- Recommends Montana's Congressional delegation support increased federal funding for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need for increased federal funding for EFNEP.
- Recommends Montana's Congressional delegation support increased federal funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need for increased federal funding for TEFAP.
- Strongly encourages the Montana Congressional delegation to support the concept of universal free lunch for school children.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need for universal free lunch for all school children.
- Advocates increasing the resource standard and allowing more flexibility in determining resources for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Food Stamp recipients.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need for this recommendation.
- Supports increased Food Stamp benefits to more accurately support adequate nutrition on a long-term basis, rather than continuing to base benefit amount on the Thrifty Food Plan.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need for this recommendation.
- Recommends state general funds be considered for enhancing the provision of qualified, competent local WIC agency staff.
 - ▶ **STATUS:** The Council has put this recommendation on hold considering state funding issues.

- Recommends Montana's Congressional delegation support increased federal funding through Older Americans legislation for home-delivered meals to the elderly.
▶ **STATUS:** The Council wrote an interim letter to the Congressional delegation to reemphasize the need increased funding for home-delivered meals for the elderly.
- Strongly encourages the School Food Service Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Programs and the Senior Nutrition Programs continue with efforts to incorporate the dietary guidelines into their meal patterns and educational strategies.
▶ **STATUS:** All three statewide programs received USDA Food Guide Pyramid and *Eat Right Montana* educational materials.
- Recommends the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) incorporate nutrition, as part of comprehensive health enhancement, into the K-12 curriculum.
▶ **STATUS:** The Office of Public Instruction is developing model health enhancement curriculum for K-6.
- Recommends the superintendent of education restore the position of Nutrition Education and Training (NET) coordinator to OPI.
▶ **STATUS:** The superintendent has restored the position on a half-time basis.
- Recommends increased emphasis on the nutrition education components of the Food Stamp and Food Distribution programs.
▶ **STATUS:** Educational materials are being presented at local food banks through videos and food demonstrations.

XIV RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were formulated on the basis of the Council's expertise, research and data collection by Council members and staff.

FOOD ACCESS ISSUES

- Increase funding for public assistance food programs.
- Decrease barriers to access for public assistance food programs.
- Improve administrative support for public food assistance programs.

- Increase outreach for public assistance food programs to increase participation.
- Provide school breakfast, lunch and summer programs in all Montana schools.

NUTRITION ISSUES

- Provide nutrition assessments for all Montanans at risk.
- Provide nutrition therapy and evaluation for high-risk populations.
- Provide accessible health care for all Montanans.

SHELTER ISSUES

- Provide assistance with shelter subsidies and affordable housing to decrease the financial burden of shelter on the family's disposable income and leave more available dollars for food.

JOB/FAMILY ISSUES

- Promote job training that leads to real jobs.
- Promote jobs that pay a liveable wage.
- Provide adequate support for families to transition from welfare to work.
- Provide child-care support for low-income parents.
- Promote Headstart with a food and nutrition component for eligible Montana children.

250 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$1.94 per copy, for a total of \$435.00 which includes \$360.00 for printing and \$125.00 for distribution.
